

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
AUSTIN DIVISION

United States of America

§

§

vs.

§

NO. 1:20-CR-47-RP-1

§

Maria Teresa Benitez-Ugarte (1)

§

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION  
OF THE UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE**

TO: THE HONORABLE ROBERT PITMAN  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

The Magistrate Judge submits this Report and Recommendation to the District Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(3). The District Court referred this case to the United States Magistrate Judge for the taking of the defendant's felony guilty plea and for her allocution pursuant to Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11.

On April 16, 2021, the defendant and counsel appeared before the Magistrate Judge. In the interests of justice, the plea hearing was conducted by video teleconference due to the exigent circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both parties consented to proceed by video teleconference, and the defendant, her attorney, the attorney for the Government, and an interpreter were present throughout the hearing. Counsel were admonished as required by the Due Process Protection Act. The Magistrate Judge finds that the video teleconference was sufficient to assess the voluntariness of the plea proceeding, as well as the defendant's credibility and understanding.

The undersigned addressed the defendant personally in open court, informed her of the admonishments under Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and determined that she understood those admonishments. Pursuant to a plea agreement, the defendant pled guilty to

one count of conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of methamphetamine, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 846 and 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(B).

The Magistrate Judge finds the following:

1. The defendant, with the advice of her attorney, consented to enter this guilty plea before the Magistrate Judge, subject to final approval and sentencing by the District Judge;
2. The defendant fully understands the nature of the charge against her and possible penalties;
3. The defendant understands her constitutional and statutory rights, understands that her constitutional and statutory rights can be waived, and understands the meaning and effect of the waiver of her constitutional and statutory rights;
4. The defendant waived prosecution by indictment;
5. The defendant's plea was made freely and voluntarily;
6. The defendant is competent to enter this plea of guilty; and
7. There is a factual basis for this plea.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Magistrate Judge **RECOMMENDS** that the District Court accept the defendant's guilty plea and, after reviewing the presentence investigation report, enter a Final Judgment of guilt against her.

### **WARNING**

The parties may file objections to this Report and Recommendation. A party filing objections must specifically identify those findings or recommendations to which objections are being made. The District Court need not consider frivolous, conclusive, or general objections. *See Battle v. United States Parole Comm'n*, 834 F.2d 419, 421 (5th Cir. 1987). A party's failure to file written objections to the proposed findings and recommendations contained within this Report within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy of the Report shall bar that party

from de novo review by the District Court of the proposed findings and recommendations and, except on grounds of plain error, shall bar the party from appellate review of proposed factual findings and legal conclusions accepted by the District Court to which no objections were filed. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140, 150-53, 106 S. Ct. 466, 472-74 (1985); *Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Ass'n*, 79 F.3d 1415, 1428-29 (5th Cir. 1996) (en banc).

**SIGNED** on April 16, 2021.



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SUSAN HIGHTOWER  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE